

Hail to the Chief

As she works to reverse the fortunes of a failing Silicon Valley giant, Yahoo's Marissa Mayer has fueled a national debate about office life, motherhood, and what it takes to be the CEO of the moment.
By Jacob Weisberg. Photographed by Mikael Jansson.





COMING UP ROSES

"I'm having the time of my life," Mayer says of her new post. Michael Kors sheath and Saint Laurent by Hedi Slimane ankle-strap pumps. Hair, Garren for Garren New York Salon; makeup, Mark Carrasquillo. Produced by Nina Qayyum for North Six. Set design, Stefan Beckman for Exposure NY. Details, see In This Issue.

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I really like even numbers, and I like heavily divisible numbers. Twelve is my lucky number—I just love how divisible it is. I don't like odd numbers, and I really don't like primes. When I turned 37, I put on a strong face, but I was not looking forward to 37. But 37 turned out to be a pretty amazing year. Especially considering that 36 is divisible by twelve!"

A few things may strike you while listening to Marissa Mayer deliver this riff, prompted by a question about how her life has changed since her son, Macallister, was born last fall. The first is that she's not kidding about being a geek. Mayer talks about numbers as if they were people, refers casually to *x*- and *y*-axes, and drops terms like *stochastic factor* (it means a random distribution) in conversation. On business issues, she speaks awkwardly, piling as many *likes* into a sentence as Alicia Silverstone in *Clueless*. But when she gets on to technology, she turns effortlessly articulate.

The next is that she is an unusually stylish geek. The day we had that conversation in her white, glossy, minimally appointed office in Sunnyvale, California, she was wearing a red Michael Kors dress with a gold belt and a brown Oscar de la Renta cardigan. This cashmere bolero is her work uniform—she has the same one in ivory, navy, black, hot pink, teal, red, and royal blue, and adds new colors every season. She was hoarse from a cold she picked up flying to New York and back, and it was eight-thirty in the evening, with hours' more work ahead. But she bubbled with excitement as she talked about her job. "I'm having the time of my life," she told me.

It might also strike you that the paradox of being both glamorous and a geek explains Mayer's rapid progress in reviving what only a year ago looked like a moribund giant. Before her arrival in July of last year, Yahoo was being written off by the tech industry, investors, even its own staff. A series of failed CEOs—non-techies from Hollywood, advertising, and finance—had gotten little purchase on the fading technology brand. It was far from clear that a six-months-pregnant, 37-year-old Google engineer and first-time CEO could remove the air of irony that had attached itself to Yahoo's purple exclamation point.

A year later, the punctuation no longer looks so absurd. Adam Cahan, Yahoo's head of mobile and another ex-Googler, told me, "Yahoo has released more products in the last six months than probably in the last five years." But it is the products themselves that represent what he describes as "a dramatic cultural shift." These include a gorgeous new weather app for mobile phones, a relaunch of the photo-sharing site Flickr, and an update of Yahoo Mail, all of which are drawing the first positive reviews the company has seen in ages. By acquiring Tumblr, the hippest of the social-media sites, Mayer solved the problem of Yahoo's aging demographics and lack of cool with a single billion-dollar stroke.

If Yahoo's bottom-line growth is still modest, investors are optimistic: The stock price is up almost 60 percent since Mayer joined. But the most important aspect of the

transformation she's leading may be the least tangible. Yahoo, a brand of early adopters before it became one for tech codgers, is returning to its role as a company that matters in Silicon Valley—able to compete for top engineering talent and acquire start-up companies without smothering them. "She is really talented. She is really aggressive," says Henry Blodget, whose Business Insider site is a partner with Yahoo Finance. "She is extremely driven, and that inspires people. Developers are excited about working for a leader like her, someone who says, 'I'm in; who's with me?' And they're excited about working for an underdog."

It's a midsummer evening in Mayer's backyard in Palo Alto. A green lawn large enough to accommodate a skating rink for holiday parties is framed by an irregularly shaped flower border and shaded by a spectacular live oak tree. To one side stands a work of sculpture: a three-foot-tall bronze frog. From the house comes a tinkle of Mozart, playing on a computer-driven baby-grand piano.

Mayer is hosting a cocktail party for entrepreneurs invited to Silicon Valley by the World Economic Forum's Technology Pioneers program. The guests are already sipping strawberry margaritas when she makes her entrance with a sleepy nine-month-old baby over her shoulder. As Macallister, who has inherited his mother's pale-blue eyes and flaxen hair, yawns and nuzzles her neck, Mayer calls him an "easy baby." At the end of a week of late-night preparations for a board-of-directors meeting and an annual shareholders' meeting, the 38-year-old Mayer might be the one ready to be tucked into bed.

Instead she finds a central spot on the patio and graciously fields comments on the company, about which everyone has an opinion. Esther Dyson, a well-known Internet pioneer and investor, comes over to praise Mayer's most controversial decision to date: a ban on the practice of employees' working at home. The ban prompted a national debate and some angry criticism that Mayer lacks empathy for women who can't afford the resources she herself enjoys: a private nursery in her office, a personal staff, and all the child care she needs.

Mayer elaborates, a little defensively, on her reasons for the change. She never meant it as any kind of larger statement about society, but simply as the right decision for Yahoo, where by various accounts *working from home* often meant *hardly working*. Teams are happier now that absent participants don't teleconference in for meetings. Messages on Yahoo's "devel-random" e-mail list, the company's informal forum, have lately turned positive. And in perhaps the clearest sign of support, employees have, she tells Dyson, "stopped leaking my e-mails" to the press.

As entrepreneurs from Japan, India, and upstate New York approach to introduce themselves, Mayer quietly inquires about their companies with the discerning focus of someone who might one day write a check to buy them. Usually, she finds some point of personal connection—an engineer they both worked with at Google, or a tech lab they both know overseas.

She suffers from shyness, she says, and has had to discipline herself to deal with it. For the first fifteen minutes she wants to leave any party, including one in her own home. "I will literally

"I didn't set out to be at the top of technology companies," Mayer insists. "I'm just geeky and shy and I like to code"

look at my watch and say, 'You can't leave until time x ,' " she says. "And if you're still having a terrible time at time x , you can leave." She has learned that if she makes herself stay for a fixed period, she often gets over her social awkwardness and ends up having fun.

That seems to be the case tonight. Mayer turns more gregarious as she explains the presence at one edge of the garden of a two-story, miniaturized model of Palo Alto's Peninsula Creamery, a local diner where Stanford students go for milk shakes (the pineapple malts are Mayer's favorite). She and her husband, Zachary Bogue, a venture capitalist who invests in start-ups focused on "big data," bought the fifteen-foot, red-and-white playhouse at a benefit auction and had a forklift deposit it over their redwood fence the previous week.

Macallister won't be old enough to play in the structure for a while, but Mayer seems to have bought it just as much for herself. Her taste runs to the brightly colored and lighthearted—"happy art," she calls it—like the plate-mounted Jeff Koons balloon dogs in her airy kitchen and the Roy Lichtenstein print in the front hall of her cheerful, comfortable, but not especially grand Craftsman-style house. In the dining room, an entire wall is covered with purple-and-gold marquees that Mayer and Bogue had made for the table-tops at their wedding, printed with words representing their favorite things. These include on her side PEPPERMINT, COLORS, PARIS, and ETRO. Tonight she is wearing an Oscar de la Renta dress, with daubs of yellow, blue, and green on a white field, reminiscent of her most famous product: the Google home page. At some point, the guests notice that she's vanished. She calls this her "CEO exit," disappearing upstairs without good-byes while the party carries on.

Mayer's bright-color and bold-pattern aesthetic comes from her Finnish mother, an art teacher who surrounded her with Marimekko prints she can still cite by name. The love of science comes from her father, an environmental engineer who worked for water companies. "They're definitely in the camp of allies, not adorers," she says. "They'll tell me when they think I did something amazing, but they'll tell me when they think I could do better. I think like my dad, but I have a huge kinship with my mom."

Growing up with a younger brother in Wausau, Wisconsin, she never had fewer than one after-school activity per day: ballet, ice-skating, piano, swimming, debate team, Brownies. She still talks to her best friend from junior high every few weeks. "It was a very well-rounded childhood, with lots of different opportunities," she says. "My mom will say she set out to overstimulate me—surround me with way too many things and let me pick. As a result, I've always been a multitasker; I've always liked a lot of variety."

At Stanford, she majored in Symbolic Systems, which combines philosophy, cognitive psychology, linguistics, and computer science. Once, reading *The Stanford Daily*, she was laughing over a column about campus icons—the local man who abuses passersby, the guy in the sandwich shop who always gets your order wrong. "And there was literally a line in there that said 'the blonde woman in the upper-division computer-science classes.' And I was, like, I'm a woman in the upper-division computer-science classes—I should know this person! I really had just been very blind to gender. And I still am."

This insensitivity can sound retrograde, especially when paired with stereotypes of feminists as "militant," "negative," and having "the chip on the shoulder," which Mayer repeated in a PBS documentary about the women's movement that aired in February. Of course, in the male-dominated culture of Silicon Valley, gender blindness, willed or otherwise, is one way of fitting in. At Google, Mayer's approach was the opposite of her friend Sheryl Sandberg's. As employee number 20, she was often asked how it felt to be the only woman on engineering teams. She'd answer truthfully: She hadn't noticed.

Mayer describes herself as naive—which only fuels the fascination surrounding her fourteen-year rise. Did she pile up a reported \$300 million in wealth and become a CEO of one of the world's top digital brands by accident? "I didn't set out to be at the top of technology companies," she insists. "I'm just geeky and shy and I like to code," she says. "Once, Eric Schmidt [then Google's CEO] pointed out to me that at Google, when you want to have an impact that's bigger than just you, you move from being an individual contributor to managing a team. . . . And I was like, Oh,

right, it would be nice to have an impact that's bigger than just me. It's not like I had a grand plan where I weighed all the pros and cons of what I wanted to do—it just sort of happened."

That is subject to debate. At Google, Mayer drove the rigorous testing and analytics that perfected search and other offerings—and she helped invent the matching algorithm that has made Google AdWords arguably the most successful product in the history of advertising. Some at the company saw her as relentless in her ambition and publicity-seeking, and sniped that she'd been effectively demoted shortly before her exit to Yahoo. Other colleagues, who remain ardent supporters, point out that she's earned every success by working unbelievably hard. Among the roles that helped her develop her reach beyond Google was running the Associate Product Manager program, a two-year course that grooms future tech leaders. Its more than 300 graduates have gone on to lead some of the Valley's most closely watched start-ups and constitute an informal network of protégés. (continued on page 895)



HAUTE TECH

In March 2012, while still at Google, Mayer makes an entrance in Marchesa at a San Francisco gala.

Punk. "That's one of the reasons Dior Homme was so popular," Courtney Love says. "First the power lesbians were wearing it. Then chicks like me started collecting it really fiendishly, almost like Prada cigarette pants. I'll never forget Michael Stipe pulling out this Dior Homme suit when R.E.M. was still together, and he's like, 'I just indulged—you have to see this.' I put it on, and it was *so beautiful*."

When Slimane left Dior, in 2007, and moved to L.A., he assumed he was leaving fashion permanently. "L.A., it's much more his world," Alt says. "Freedom, skateboarders, the beach. If you're that interested in music, Paris is not the right city for you."

"The first election"—of Obama, in 2008—"was a big part of me moving," Slimane says over breakfast one morning at the Polo Lounge of the Beverly Hills Hotel. "I thought it was a very promising time for America—I've always been more interested in politics in the U.S. than in France."

When Slimane returned to Yves Saint Laurent last year, it wasn't because he wanted to rejoin the fashion world. (He didn't.) It was because he wanted to rejoin YSL. But he would do it, he decided, not as a Parisian fashion guy but as a California artist. Because he moves increasingly with L.A. rockers, he has a sense of the new vanguard of style. ("Many of the cult figures in men's fashion were musicians," he observes.) And because he has one foot in the art world, he's able to approach style in its purest form: not as a thing to be sold in department stores but as an original art, a process of experimentation with color and materials, focused through his own camera lens. Traditionally, designers are not supposed to look directly at a model or client during a fitting; they study the clothes only in the mirror, a method of stepping away from the material—the way a playwright might watch rehearsals from the back row. (Christian Dior famously used a long wand to gesture during fittings, the better to get farther away still.) Slimane says he thinks of his camera today as a couturier's mirror. His hope is, ultimately, not so much to invent fashion as to capture life.

The morning after the men's runway show, I meet Slimane at the eighteenth-century building where he's constructing a new Paris studio and atelier for Saint Laurent—part of his plan to return

the house's heart to the Left Bank and revive its couture operation. Slimane loves the building, but he hates the way that it was renovated. For one thing, there are weird floors: modern tile in the main salon, brand-new hardwood everywhere else. For another, the detailing is lousy: There's embarrassing faux-marbling on the molding, and the doorknobs are all contemporary. Then there are the fireplaces, nineteenth-century models unsuited to the rest of the room. Slimane wants to replace them with period-appropriate hearths, but because the updated fireplaces are considered nineteenth-century artifacts, one of his architects explains, the local government has placed red tape around their removal. Slimane shakes his head.

The stately three-story building with large windows will house the receiving studio and tailoring room. (Across the street, on the Rue de l'Université, is a Sciences Po campus—the irony is not lost on Slimane.) When I arrive, he has just had chandeliers hung in the receiving room, which has an arcing balcony above the large stone courtyard. The chandeliers are dummies—he does not yet have the right period antiques—but he wants to see how they look as visitors enter. As with the chassis of his Rolls-Royce or the shoulder width of a suit, it is crucial to get the proportions right.

When Slimane is at work like this—on the trail of the real thing—his demeanor changes. He is no longer shy, deferential, and gentle; he's confident, unwavering, wry. "Are there any questions?" he asks his architects. After pausing to wince at an electrical-outlet panel that someone planted in the middle of the floor ("They must have been drinking or something"), Slimane steps gingerly out onto the balcony and proudly surveys his work in progress. If he does everything right, he explains, this atelier will have a sense of the old Parisian "ritual," a line of continuity back to the past.

"There is that balance I want to find between the contemporary world—my studio in Los Angeles—and Paris—the church, pure tradition," he explains. "The fashion is about both influences." He pauses. "It's the moment juxtaposed with tradition. That's the house." □

PERFECT STORM

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happened while he was filming the British miniseries *To the Ends of the Earth*

in South Africa, in which he, the actress Denise Black, and a South African friend were carjacked at gunpoint by a gang of six men. "I went through every beat of the emotional response you'd expect in that situation," he says. "Panic, fight-or-flight, sickness, utter terror, adrenaline rush, and then—calm, acceptance." He managed to talk their way out of it, but after production wrapped, he stayed in Africa to go swimming with sharks, then went skydiving out of a microlight plane, in order to tame the whole experience and get the adrenaline out of his system. "That was a turning point for him," says Alice Eve, his *Star Trek into Darkness* costar and a friend since they appeared together in 2004's *Hawking*. "That's when he realized his own powers of persuasion and physical control."

The only other place he gets the same release is acting, he says. After playing Assange and appearing in *August*, he has roles in Steve McQueen's *12 Years a Slave*; Peter Jackson's *Hobbit* sequel, in which he gives voice to Smaug the dragon; and *The Imitation Game*, in which he plays mathematician Alan Turing. "If I were lucky enough to be in the 4 percent of our population that's working, that's the first blessing. Second blessing is if you get any decent work; the third blessing is if you get variety of work. . . ." There's a fourth blessing and a fifth blessing as well ("the fifth being that it's going my way"). More than likely, there is a sixth and a seventh blessing I never even get to hear about. He keeps talking right up to the second he says goodbye—"OK, great, bye"—turns, and marches off down Sullivan Street, beneath a sweltering New York sun. □

HAIL TO THE CHIEF

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One of the program's alumnae, Jess Lee, the CEO of the fashion site Polyvore, describes Mayer as a perfectionist. "She'll spot a lot of little details other people might not notice," she says. "But when you add them up in aggregate, it's the difference between a beautiful, polished product and one that feels more awkward." Lee notes that when Mayer recently hosted an APM reunion at her house, she took time to write a personal note in each of the 200 commemorative photo books.

Mayer has a taste for the comfortable and familiar as well as gloss and glamour. Most days she drives herself back and forth to (continued on page 896)

(continued from page 895) work in an eighteen-year-old BMW, but she has also attracted attention for a high-profile social life, including parties she and Bogue threw at their penthouse apartment atop the Four Seasons Hotel in San Francisco. The couple met in 2007, via a mutual friend. A former football and rugby player at Harvard, Bogue, who has a chiseled jaw, tousled brown hair, and a big, athletic build, shares his wife's taste for physical challenges. They run half-marathons together and love hiking, skiing, travel, and good restaurants.

These days, though, she's lucky to squeeze in a round of her favorite games, Bejeweled Blitz or Candy Crush Saga, on her smartphone. With less time, the couple is more focused on "walking to our local park and pushing Macallister in the swing," Bogue tells me, seated on a sofa in the living room as the party winds down. "It was clear sailing for both of us when the baby was conceived. Let's just say it's been a lot busier since."

How do people misunderstand his wife? I ask. "Marissa doesn't really like cupcakes," he says, referring to the legend that she once created a spreadsheet of different cupcake and frosting recipes. "She just called the trend early."

And what does Mayer misunderstand about herself? "I think she's not as shy as she thinks she is," he says.

I get a sense of Mayer's professional style in a product-review meeting where I am allowed to be a fly on the wall on the condition that I not talk about unreleased products. About 25 of Yahoo's top designers and engineers crowd into a darkened conference room on the Sunnyvale campus to present updates on a project code-named Grand Slam, an effort to bring a more coherent look and identity to Yahoo's pages. For an intense 80 minutes, Mayer does most of the talking, getting deep into the weeds about the size of navigation buttons, background colors, and spacing between columns. Working through a peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich and a cup of pretzels from the cafeteria, she disarms confrontation with an easy, whinnying laugh.

When one of the project managers notes that a design change is likely to harm advertising revenue, Mayer makes it clear that the product comes first. "I just want to make sure it's user-experience positive," she says. "I'm

worried that we're making trade-offs that are negative to users."

What might otherwise look like a crazed level of micromanagement serves a purpose. In the past, Yahoo's CEOs were routinely ignored by the engineering staff. But Mayer speaks with a decisive air of authority. "I'm not sold on this," she tells the team. "I'm not ready to green-light it."

After running through three CEOs in less than a year, Yahoo's revenue was shrinking, and it was being valued at little more than the sum of its key Asian assets: its stake in the Chinese Internet giant Alibaba and Yahoo Japan. Its user base was more than 700 million, but unlike Facebook, Google, and Apple, Yahoo had no fundamental function—e-mail, search, photo-sharing—that wasn't done better by others. In Silicon Valley, there was much residual loyalty to the company, where according to Mayer, half the industry's engineers have worked at some point in their careers. But it had turned into a place where no one wanted to go.

It was at that point that Daniel Loeb, an activist investor now battling Sony's Japanese management, got control of several board seats and pushed the idea of hiring Mayer. She was, somewhat inconveniently, newly pregnant, and much ink was spilled critiquing her plan to take a short maternity leave. Could she nurture a new baby and a corporate turnaround at the same time?

Thanks to Mayer's financial resources and physical capacity, this turned out not to be much of an issue. In fact, the combination of the pregnancy and the new job gave her even more energy than usual. "One night I looked up and was like, 'Oh, my God, it's midnight and I have a husband and I'm, like, eight months pregnant. I need to leave!' I was just here working, having the best possible time. When Zack and I were brushing our teeth in the morning, he was like, 'Where were you last night?'"

She set up a nursery next to her office, and for several months after Macallister was born, he and his nanny came to work with her. Business problems were much more serious. She was shocked to learn how little interaction Yahoo executives had with their employees. In her first weeks on the job, Mayer sought to change that, responding to questions on "devel-random" and taking her lunch in the cafeteria.

She also instituted a weekly all-hands

meeting and added new perks with symbolic importance: free food in the cafeterias, on par with the standard at Google and elsewhere, iPhones instead of BlackBerrys, and the elimination of turnstiles that were costing employees an average of six minutes a day going in and out of buildings. While insisting that everyone show up for work, she also began removing cubicle barriers and office walls to foster a more collaborative work environment.

Mayer has applied this democratic thinking to her board presentations as well. Every quarter, she offers highlights and lowlights as voted by the employees. At the most recent board meeting, the top vote-getters included the weather app, the Tumblr acquisition, the Flickr relaunch, moving into the old *New York Times* building near Times Square, as well as Yahoo's new family-leave policy, which went a long way to assuage employees still stewing over the ban on working from home. All recent parents—male, female, adoptive, or biological—get eight weeks anytime during their first year with a new child. Biological mothers get an additional eight weeks.

Buying Tumblr represents Mayer's boldest step to position Yahoo for growth again. She first met David Karp, Tumblr's 27-year-old founder, in December. They met again in February to pursue partnership ideas. "That's when I really started to use the site a lot more and try to understand it," she says. "We started meeting more intensely in April. That's when we said, 'My gosh, if we're going to do all this, it makes sense to merge.' I loved David's perspective on the products, and I think he respected mine. We had a tremendous meeting of the minds in terms of what we wanted to build and what we wanted to do."

"I've done now between three and four dozen acquisitions in my career," she goes on, "and I've never seen this kind of lock-and-key fit between two companies. Our demographic is older. Theirs is the youngest on the Web. We pride ourselves on publishing at scale—they have some of the best publishing tools available. We're strong in news and sports and finance. They are strong in all the different complementary pieces—fashion, food, and architecture. They need monetization. We have monetization that can be turnkey for them and not very obtrusive."

For his part, Karp says he was won

over not just by Mayer's commitment to keep running Tumblr as an independent company but by what a happy and optimistic person she is. "That's something I've always valued, and I think it's kind of a unique sensibility in the tech industry," he says. Karp points out that in a rapidly changing tech landscape, many of the biggest players are now playing defense, looking for acquisitions that help protect their empires. "Meanwhile, Yahoo, out of left field, is in attack mode. There was nothing defensive about Yahoo buying Tumblr."

Tumblr, of course, is far from profitable, and with a user base deeply resistant to commercial messages, there's no clear path to take it there. While Mayer and Karp figure out how to turn it into a business, it will be a burden on Yahoo's bottom line. The company can afford it—Yahoo is currently cash-rich—but growth has so far been slow: a mere 2 percent in 2012. As advertising revenues continue to show declines, Mayer has tried to set expectations strategically, telling investors that exceeding industry growth levels is going to be the work of years.

In reviving Yahoo, Mayer faces the challenge of a diffuse set of products and a business model based on advertising. Audiences are moving quickly from desktops to small-screen mobile devices, where marketers struggle to capture attention, and revenue per user is much less. Mayer's bet is that Yahoo will thrive amid this transition by going back to its roots as the "daily habits" company, providing the best tools for what people do digitally every day.

"Close your eyes and listen to this list," she says. I close my eyes and hear her recite: "E-mail, maps, weather, news, stock quotes, share photos, group communication, sports scores, games."

"You're listening to what people do on their mobile phones," she says. "And it sounds like a list of what Yahoo does." □

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

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perception of Scheeren is dusted with a certain amount of rarefied style. His life has brought him into contact with celebrities (the architecture-loving Brad Pitt, for example, who visited OMA's offices and buildings in Rotterdam), but he professes skepticism about their world. "You find out that there are people who are decent," he says, "and people who are not, and it has no

relation to whether they are celebrities or not," and he won't be drawn as to which stars of his acquaintance fall into which category. The breakup, in 2012, of his five-year relationship with the film actress Maggie Cheung exposed him to the ugliness of gossip magazines. "That's the horrible part of my life," he says. "There is nothing not stupid about those magazines, nothing right." It's one reason he staunchly refuses to discuss his personal life now.

And for all the paparazzo interest that came with his relationship with Cheung, he is also someone who works eighteen hours a day, obsesses about detail, and will spend weeks immersing himself in building codes to discover unexpected opportunities in them. He would build all the practice's architectural models himself if he had time—"Unfortunately, I'm good at these things . . . I want everything to be correct."

"He is a fantastic storyteller," says Tong, the businessman backing his Kuala Lumpur tower, "but he tends to come up with quite practical solutions. He solves problems." The Chinese architect Wang Xiao'an, who collaborated with Scheeren on getting CCTV built, says "he has a dream of architecture" coupled with a vigorously functional side. "He has his logic and knows what he's doing."

What interests Scheeren, beyond the fascination with his craft, is the crossover between different forms of culture. In March 2012 he created a project called Archipelago Cinema, which, pending the completion of the artist's studio and those skyscrapers, is the principal completed work to date of Büro Ole Scheeren. Created for Tilda Swinton and Joe Apichatpong's *Film on the Rocks* Yao Noi festival in Thailand, it is also the most ephemeral. An invited audience of 120, among them Swinton, Apichatpong, Chloë Sevigny, and the MoMA curator Joshua Siegel, were taken by boat, at night, to an unknown destination.

They disembarked onto a floating raft, furnished with beanbags, from which they could watch projections of a 1903 *Alice in Wonderland* and a 1924 *Peter Pan*. Only when the shows were over did floodlights switch on, to reveal that they were in a breathtaking cove, flanked by 100-meter-high rock formations. Ancient geology was made to look as hallucinatory and insubstantial as images flickering on a screen. "We

went on some kind of journey together," says Apichatpong. "Cinema is about that, about getting lost in a dream . . . you are transported to your childhood memories." Appearing and disappearing in an evening, it was a theatrical version of those escapes to other worlds that Scheeren likes so much.

Archipelago Cinema's fame spread, and requests have been coming in from Tahiti, Cape Town, Pittsburgh, and elsewhere to replicate it. A reedition of the project at the 2012 Venice Architecture Biennale can fairly be called Scheeren's biggest mistake to date, about which he is palpably embarrassed. Here the film shown was a celebration of Scheeren himself, as tedious and pompous as a feature-length car advert. It also gave little clue that works such as CCTV were not Scheeren's single-handed creations. This episode suggests an unexpected insecurity.

It is presumably one reason Rem Koolhaas is not keen to discuss his former protégé. A request to do so leads to this terse SMS:

ROWAN, COMPLETE CONFIDENCE IN YOU AS PORTRAITIST . . . BEST, REM

Scheeren's characteristic restlessness means that he is now thinking of working, and possibly living, in Europe again—he has been invited to compete for a project in Berlin, and I later catch up with him on a scouting mission in London. But, for now, he is as much at home in Beijing as anywhere, even if "home" for him is never something cozy and settled.

In his life and work so far, he encompasses both illusion and reality, dream and fact, storytelling and substance. His career combines the unarguable presence of CCTV on the skyline with the yet-to-be realized towers in Singapore, Bangkok, and Kuala Lumpur, and Archipelago Cinema, which vanished almost as soon as it appeared. By the high measure of his own ambitions, he still has things to prove, but the will is most definitely there to do so. □

STAND AND DELIVER

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(she goes running in it most mornings), wearing an American-flag scarf from Urban Outfitters, a white tank top, blue-striped linen shorts, and red Toms slippers. "Thank you!" can be heard. Also: "Our state loves you!" Occasionally a hiss or a boo (continued on page 898)